

## **MAYOR'S UPDATE—Safe Routes to School and Section 106, November 26, 2018**

Dear Residents,

Last week, the Town Manager (Gene) and I were asked to join a call coordinated by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the State Highway Administration (SHA) regarding our Safe Routes to School (SRTS) grant project and the ongoing compliance review of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). Recall that Section 106 covers the undertaking of federally-funded projects and the consultation process used in determining potential adverse impacts of these projects to historical properties.

Since the FHWA is the agency providing the federal funds to the SHA's SRTS grant program, they are also the agency in charge of this Section 106 review. Last week, they asked that we complete our efforts by the end of this month in cataloging past correspondence between consulting parties and the Town. They also requested that we include any past responses the Town may have sent to the consulting parties since the beginning of the project. However, FHWA is limiting this administrative record to only written responses, not verbal communications. And since FHWA wants written evidence from the past, we cannot create nor accept any new documentation, e.g., no new responses nor any new comments. FHWA hopes to complete their review around the beginning of the new year (2019). This is an important milestone since the Town cannot go out to solicit bids for the SRTS sidewalks until this review is completed.

The SHA is finishing its technical review of the our SRTS plans, specifications, and cost estimates (PSE) and the invitation for bid (IFB) package. Last week, SHA agreed to send the Town a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to provide an 80:20 shared grant (SHA would provide 80% of the funds, and the Town 20%) to ensure enough funding is available to complete the project. You may recall that the Council approved by ordinance the appropriation of our estimated share in anticipation of this MOU. This too is an important milestone that must be completed before we can seek bids.

To recap: The Town Office is finishing its part of the Section 106 administrative record. FHWA hopes to complete its review near the beginning of next year (2019). SHA is finalizing its technical review of our SRTS PSE and IFB package and will be sending us an MOU for additional funding (80:20 grant share). Once these actions are complete, only then will we be authorized to advertise for bids. We are still anticipating construction to begin next spring (2019).

One last thing: I realize that there are still differences of opinion among residents about this SRTS project and the installation of new sidewalks along Oxford and Kenilworth. However, I campaigned on the promise to finish this project, to stop the divisiveness, and to get us all to set aside our individual differences and instead strive towards common ground. This SRTS project is not about having it all one way or another; it's not about what one person wants over another. It's about being able to live together as a community in harmony. And to do this, it will take each of us and all of us together to get on the same path towards greater understanding, empathy, and compromise. Please work with me and with one another to help us get there. Let's move forward as a united community. Thank you.